



January 23, 2020

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RoundHouseTheatre.org

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB287
Maryland Arts and Culture Capital Grant Program**

Thank you for consideration of SB287. This legislation creates the Maryland Arts and Culture Capital Grant Program, a new capital grant fund that will be administered by the Maryland State Arts Council. The Program has two components - a competitive grant program for large institutions (\$3 m+ budgets) and another one for mid-size to small institutions that is open to both arts supported through the Maryland State Arts Council.

Round House Theatre is a home for outstanding ensemble acting and lifelong learning that seeks to captivate audiences with stories that inspire compassion, evoke emotions, and demand conversation. We have recently re-opened our renovated theatre in Bethesda, designed to serve as a gathering place for audiences and community members alike. Now that we have opened our new home to the public, we're excited to share it by continuing to improve access to the arts.

The consistent availability of capital funds through the creation of an Arts and Culture Grant Program would enable us to focus operating resources on mission-based initiatives. We will advance our Theatre for Everyone philosophy through programs such as Free Play and On the House, which offer tickets to Round House performances at no cost to local teenagers and college students, as well as to nonprofit community groups and organizations. It would also allow us to expand our extensive catalog of discount ticket programs, including Pay-What-You Can performances, 2-for-1 performances, under-35 discounts, and more.

This potential avenue for new funding would further improve the accessibility of our productions, offering relaxed performances for sensory-sensitive adults and teens; investing in new technologies for Assistive Listening Devices, Audio Description, and Open Captioning; and creating partnerships to build relationships with the blind, Deaf, hard-of-hearing, neurodiverse, and visually impaired communities.

An Arts and Culture Grant Program would also enable us to make great strides toward equity in our productions, commissioning 30 new plays exclusively from female playwrights and playwrights of color; creating a New Play Festival to promote new work across American theatre; and achieving Equity On Stage by ensuring that at least half of our actors and directors each year are people of color.

We at Round House are committed to equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility across our organization. Having SB 287 pass this year would enable us to capitalize on the momentum of our grand re-opening to continue to advance our dedication to offering Theatre for Everyone. For these reasons, we ask for a FAVORABLE REPORT on SB 287.

Sincerely,

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